

Labour Market News

CENTRAL ALBERTA

Alberta Employment and Immigration

JOB SEEKERS

Rehabilitation therapists

Making a difference

Helping people overcome physical challenges and different disorders is all in a day's work for rehabilitation therapy professionals. Jobs in this field include physiotherapist, occupational therapist, speech language pathologist, audiologist, respiratory therapist and recreation therapist.

"It's extremely rewarding work. Every day, you help improve people's quality of life," says Red Deer respiratory therapist Vanessa Robertson.

Rehabilitation therapists work with patients of all ages in a variety of settings, from hospitals, health care centres and private clinics to schools, homes and long-term care centres. Each job requires different skills and training, but they all have one thing in common.

"For all of these occupations you have to be a caring individual who wants to provide quality patient care and be able to help and support individuals in the rehabilitation process," says Sheldon Loutitt, a human resources recruiter for the David Thompson Health Region (DTHR), which currently employs more than 200 occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech language pathologists, plus another 180 therapy assistants.

Growing demand

As the region's population grows and ages, the need for rehabilitation therapists is on the rise. "Right now it's very much an employee market. There are lots of employment opportunities," says Red Deer physiotherapist Nicki Julien.

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Physiotherapist Bryan Boorman helps a patient with a sprained knee.



Performance reviews shouldn't create stress, they should reduce it.

EMPLOYERS

Less pain and more gain: performance reviews

For some managers, a root canal would be more fun than the annual employee performance review. The process can seem to be time-consuming and a potential nest for manager-worker conflict.

But before letting another performance review fall behind schedule or skipping it altogether, employers should remember some of the benefits of performance reviews. And for supervisors who don't have a review process in place, they may want to start booking a few appointments.

Why review?

Performance reviews are far more than a report card used to calculate a pay raise:

- They are an opportunity to open a clear and honest line of communication with an employee, identifying problems and solutions.
- Performance reviews can help match employee skills and ambitions with the employer's business strategy.
- Done well, a performance review helps the employee understand their own importance in the organization and how they can contribute more.

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See page 7 for a related Best Practice story.

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NEXT ISSUE...

Jobs in oil and gas servicing

JOB SEEKER FEATURE STORY

Therapists in demand

Continued from page 1

Regional health facilities are continually posting ads for various rehabilitation therapy jobs and there are also opportunities in the private sector.

"There is a high demand, not just in our region but throughout the province and across the country," says Loutitt.

Education

Part of the demand is due to the fact that some rehabilitation jobs require extensive education.

Physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists and audiologists generally require a master's degree (six years of education). Only the top students are admitted to master's programs. For example, the Master of Science in Physical Therapy program at the University of Alberta accepts about 75 students each year, but about 400 to 500 apply.

Recreation therapists can work with a two-year diploma, while respiratory therapists require a three-year diploma. Clinical practicums are usually part of the education process for all rehabilitation occupations.

Diverse work opportunities

Within each occupation are a variety of different areas rehabilitation therapists can explore. For example, Julien owns a physiotherapy clinic that specializes in orthopedics—helping patients with muscle, nerve, bone and joint issues. But physiotherapists can also work with patients who have nervous system disorders (neurology) or heart and lung injury or disease (cardio-respiratory).

Robertson started her career as a respiratory therapist working in a hospital with critically ill patients. She now works in home care, spending most of her day visiting patients in their homes.

"There's tons of room to move around if you want a new challenge," says Robertson. "For people who enjoy having a challenge every day and a different day, every day, it's a good job. There are so many different branches you can take, it's just limitless."

Work conditions

There is a mix of full-time, part-time and casual positions in this field. Hours of work vary widely, from standard office hours to evening and weekend shift work. To attract workers, many employers are offering more flexible hours.

Some positions can be physically demanding. Workers may be standing for much of the workday and they may

have to help lift or transfer patients for treatment.

Job skills

Working with patients all day requires excellent people skills. "A huge component of our job is educating people about their injury or condition and what part they can take in their recovery through exercises or home management," says Julien.

Rehabilitation therapists need to be energetic and enthusiastic to help motivate their clients, but they also need to be compassionate and sensitive to the difficulties their clients face. Good problem solving skills are needed to assess patients and develop a treatment plan for each client's unique needs. Workers in this field also need to be team players. Rehabilitation therapists from different fields often work together to provide integrated patient care.

Excellent pay, plus much more

Jobs in rehabilitation therapy offer great pay and benefits, plus plenty of opportunities for professional growth. Employers encourage workers to continually upgrade their skills and may provide funding for courses.

Workers looking for new challenges can branch out into different specialty areas. There is also room to move into supervisory or management roles, do research or start a private practice. No matter what direction they take, the work never gets boring, says Julien.

"What's exciting about our job is that you get to help people through difficult times. You get to see them make huge gains in their physical recovery," she says. "It's not a job you ever have to leave because you aren't learning any more."

REHABILITATION ASSISTANTS

Rehabilitation therapy assistants are trained to provide support to therapists. Physical therapist assistant, speech-language pathologist assistant and occupational therapist assistant are some common jobs in this field. Most employers require a related diploma.

EDUCATION

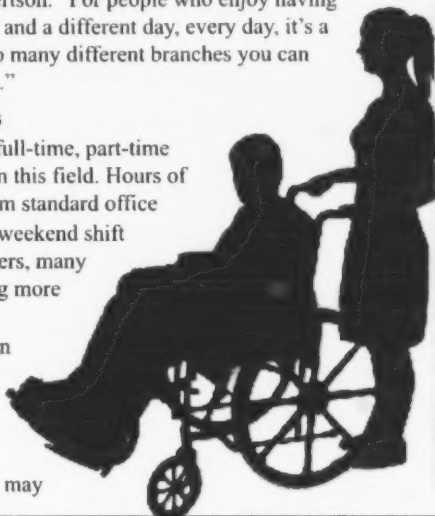
MacEwan College (www.gmcc.ab.ca) and NorQuest College (www.norquest.ab.ca) in Edmonton; SAIT in Calgary (www.sait.ca) and Medicine Hat College (www.mhc.ab.ca) offer various therapy assistant programs from 14 months to two-years in length.

WAGES

According to the Therapist Assistant Association of Alberta (www.thaaa.ca) the average occupational or physical therapist assistant earns \$28,000 a year. Hourly wages for speech-language pathologist assistants generally range from \$16 to \$20 per hour.

WHERE TO FIND WORK

Assistants work in hospitals, clinics, private practice, schools, home care and long-term care. Although the workers are not as in-demand as therapists, it is a growing field. The Therapist Assistant Association of Alberta has an online job board at www.thaaa.ca.



Health and healing

Working in rehabilitation therapy

Careers

TO CONSIDER

The information below provides a brief snapshot of six different occupations in the rehabilitation therapy field. For more information, go to www.alis.gov.ab.ca and search OCCinfo by the NOC (National Occupation Classification) codes. Wage information is from the 2007 Alberta Wage and Salary Survey and the David Thompson Health Region (DTHR) 2005-2008 Salary Scales (www.hsaa.ca).

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST (NOC 3143)

Occupational therapists help people who face obstacles, such as physical injury or illness, or developmental disabilities, to participate in everyday activities. OTs must be registered with the Alberta College of Occupational Therapists (www.acot.ca). To learn more about this job, go to the Society of Alberta Occupational Therapists website at www.saot.ca.



Average Hourly Wage: \$33.44 **DTHR:** \$28.41 - \$42.08
Education: Master's degree in occupational therapy
Training: The University of Alberta (www.ualberta.ca) in Edmonton offers a master's degree program in occupational therapy. The prerequisite is a bachelor's degree.

SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST (NOC 3141)



Speech-language pathologists work with children and adults to prevent, assess, diagnose and provide treatment and counselling for speech, language, voice and swallowing disorders. They are registered with the Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (www.acslpa.ab.ca). To learn more about this job, go to the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (www.caslpa.ca).

Average Hourly Wage: \$37.16 **DTHR:** \$30.01 - \$42.08
Education: Master's degree in speech-language pathology
Training: The University of Alberta (www.ualberta.ca) in Edmonton offers a master's degree program in speech-language pathology. The prerequisite is a bachelor's degree and specific prerequisite courses.

RECREATION THERAPIST (NOC 3144)

Recreation therapists work with people who have illnesses and disabling conditions, improving their health and quality of life through leisure and recreation. To learn more, visit the Alberta Therapeutic Recreation Association website at www.alberta-tr.org.



Average Hourly Wage: \$27.32 **DTHR:** \$27.28 - \$38.33
Education: Minimum two-year diploma in therapeutic recreation
Training: NorQuest College in Edmonton (www.norquest.ab.ca) and Lethbridge College (www.lethbridgecollege.ab.ca) offer two-year diploma programs in therapeutic recreation. The University of Alberta in Edmonton (www.ualberta.ca) offers a four-year BA degree in Recreation, Sport and Tourism.

PHYSIOTHERAPIST (NOC 3142)

Physiotherapists (also called physical therapists) help patients improve and maintain their physical performance and physical independence. They are regulated by the College of Physical Therapists of Alberta (www.cpta.ab.ca). For more information, visit the Alberta Physiotherapy Association website at www.albertaphysio.org.

Average Hourly Wage: \$33.20 (*Service Canada 2007 data)
DTHR: \$28.41 - \$42.08

Education: Minimum bachelor's degree in physiotherapy, although many schools are changing to a master's degree requirement in response to industry demands
Training: The University of Alberta (www.ualberta.ca) in Edmonton offers a master's degree program in physical therapy. The prerequisite is a bachelor's degree.



AUDIOLOGIST (NOC 3141)



Audiologists work with children and adults to prevent, assess, diagnose and provide treatment and counselling for hearing and balance disorders. They are registered with the Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (www.acslpa.ab.ca). To learn more about this job, go to the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (www.caslpa.ca).

Average Hourly Wage: \$37.16 **DTHR:** \$31.67 - \$42.08
Education: Master's degree in audiology
Training: Master's degree programs in audiology are offered by the University of British Columbia (Vancouver); the University of Western Ontario (London) and Dalhousie University (Halifax).

RESPIRATORY THERAPIST (NOC 3214)

Respiratory therapists assist physicians in diagnosing, treating, educating and promoting wellness in patients who have respiratory and associated disorders. To learn more, visit the College and Association of Respiratory Therapists of Alberta website at www.carta.ca.



Average Hourly Wage: \$33.21 **DTHR:** \$28.03 - \$40.15
Education: Three-year diploma program
Training: NAIT in Edmonton (www.nait.ca) and SAIT in Calgary (www.sait.ca) offer three-year diploma programs in respiratory therapy.

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE A ...

Speech-language pathologist

How did you start in this career?

I worked at a hospital in Edmonton as an electroencephalography (EEG) technologist, which involves measuring the brain's electrical activity. At age 25, I lost my sight. I took a year off to learn Braille and adjust to the change. I returned to work as a clerk/typist in the same hospital department. After four years I was ready for a new challenge and decided to go to university part-time. A friend suggested I become a speech-language pathologist. I thought it sounded like a fascinating career. In 1988, I became a full-time student. I finished my undergrad in 1991 and got a job at the Red Deer Regional Hospital. I also went on to complete my master's degree in speech-language pathology in 1996.

What do you enjoy about your job?

I meet the most fabulous parents in the world. Their children have 10 times the needs of other children but they're devoted to getting them the help they need. I love kids—it's rewarding to help them get from where they are to the next level. They understand you're there to help them and they work so hard. It's fun—I love it.

Does your job affect your lifestyle?

The hours are extremely good for me. I work part-time on a regular 8:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. shift. Most speech pathologists don't work on the weekend unless they're in private practice.

What are some of the challenges of your job?

I have an aide who assists me with the visual aspects of the job—pulling charts, preparing materials, observing and working with the children and communicating information to me in a sensitive manner. I have to train the aide to work hand in glove with me, which can be challenging. I can't see the same number of children that a sighted person does because of the extra time required for me to do the actual job, but we make it work. I can't say that we've had many parents that have been upset because



Through play, speech language pathologist Kim Skibsted works on receptive and expressive skills with three-year-old Keana, who has Down syndrome. Skibsted, who is blind, works with the help of an aide.

I'm blind. The majority of parents seem to have a lot of respect for me and I believe they see me as a role model for their child.

What are your career goals?

Because I've had to work so hard to get where I am and I'm comfortable where I am, my career goal is just to learn more about the population that I work with and to be better at my job.

Who is suited to this career?

You have to be a caring, giving person because you're caring for somebody else's needs. You need good observation skills, patience and an enthusiastic personality, especially when working with children.

What advice would you give to someone looking at this career?

It's an extremely rewarding career, especially if you like helping people. It's extremely interesting, because there are so many areas you can specialize in. If you love to learn, it's a great profession.

CAREER PROFILE

Kim Skibsted

Skibsted is a speech language pathologist at the 49 Street Community Health Centre in Red Deer. She works with preschool children in the Pediatric Rehabilitation Program, helping children with developmental and cognitive delays. Skibsted is one of a handful of blind speech-language pathologists in North America. She receives some financial support from Alberta Employment and Immigration and the David Thompson Health Region, which employs an aide to help her with various aspects of her work. "I work under an 'I can' model. What I can't do, I either find somebody else to do it or find a way to get around it. It's really a matter of working with your strengths and finding support to help with your lesser strengths," says Skibsted.

Working as a SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST (NOC 3141)**Wages**

Speech-language pathologists employed by the David Thompson and East Central health regions earn from \$30.01 per hour to \$42.08 per hour, depending on experience (visit www.hsaa.ca for full contract details). According to the 2007 Alberta Wage and Salary Survey, the average annual salary for speech-language pathologists (full or part-time) was \$57,300 to \$90,900.

Education

Speech-language pathologists require a master's degree in speech-language pathology. The University of Alberta (www.ualberta.ca) offers a Master of Science degree program in speech-language pathology. The entrance requirement is a four-year bachelor's degree (in a discipline other than speech-language pathology) with specified prerequisite courses and a grade point average of at least 3.4. The U of A speech-language pathology masters program admits 60 students per year.

Hiring tips

The Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists has employment ads posted at www.acslpa.ab.ca/employment_ads-f.html. In Central Alberta, major employers include the David Thompson Health Region (www.dthr.ab.ca) and the East Central Health Region (www.ech.ab.ca). They are also employed by other organizations such as school boards and private clinics.

Coping with inflation ...

The cost of living is on the rise; are your wages?

You don't have to read newspaper headlines to know that the cost of living is on the rise. Prices have jumped for everything from bread and gasoline to transportation, utilities and housing.

According to Statistics Canada, consumer prices across Canada rose 3.4 per cent between July 2007 and July 2008, the highest 12-month increase since March 2003. The biggest jumps were at the pump and at the grocery store. The price of gasoline was up 28.6 per cent and the cost of bakery products rose 13.2 per cent. In Alberta, consumer prices jumped 3.5 per cent in the same time period—an improvement, though, over the 4.4 per cent jump between June 2007 and June 2008.

Is your wage keeping pace?

With the increased cost of living, workers may be wondering if their wages are keeping pace. If you got a raise this year, was the increase enough to cover the cost of inflation? You may be earning more, but rising costs may be eating away at your raise.

For example, in 2007, the Average Weekly Earnings Growth (AWEG) in Alberta was up 4.5 per cent, but inflation was five per cent. Things improved in the first six months of 2008, however. Alberta's average inflation between January and June was 3.6 per cent, while AWEG was up five per cent in the same time period.

Comparing wages

When negotiating your next raise, it might be helpful to look at trends in public and private negotiated wage settlements to see if your own raise is keeping pace. In the first five months of 2008, negotiated wage settlements in Alberta averaged 3.8 per cent—5.7 per cent in the private sector and 1.2 per cent in the public sector. Don't be afraid to negotiate a raise that covers the cost of inflation and also puts a little extra in your pocket to reward you for your hard work.

Stretch your dollars

Until your raise comes through, there are plenty of resources available to help you budget and save money.

Credit Counselling Services of Alberta has an online booklet called *Stretch Your Dollars* (www.creditcounselling.com/assets/files/pdf/StretchYourDollars.pdf) that includes helpful tips and

BUDGETING TIPS

work it out

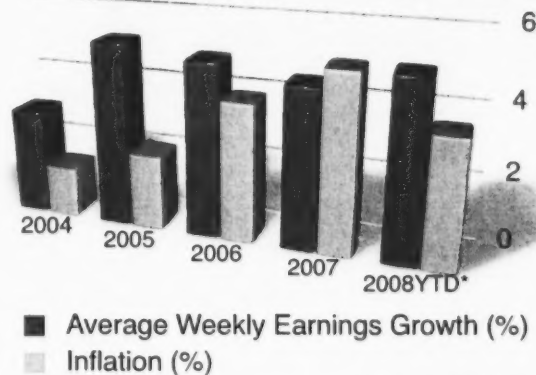
Measure\$ of inflation

An increase in the cost of consumer goods—everything from food and shelter to furniture, clothing, transportation, and recreation—is called inflation. Inflation is measured in different ways.

Core inflation excludes items like indirect taxes, energy and food products, since prices can fluctuate widely from month to month. Core inflation is a measure of inflation used by the Bank of Canada as a guideline in setting the nation's monetary policy.

Headline inflation (also called overall inflation) is a measure of the total inflation within an economy, including things like energy and food. So while the cost of gasoline and bakery products jumped 28.6 per cent and 13.2 per cent between July 2007 and July 2008, Canada's core inflation was only 1.5 per cent during the same time period.

Trends in Wage and Inflation (Alberta)



NOTE: *Year to Date Jan.-June
SOURCE: Statistics Canada

suggestions on how to cut expenses and boost your income. Some timely budgeting tips include:

- ☛ To deal with the high cost of gas, consider using public transit, car pooling or riding your bike to work
- ☛ Buy food in bulk or join a collective kitchen
- ☛ Use energy efficient light bulbs and appliances to save on electricity costs

COMING EVENTS IN CENTRAL ALBERTA

EMPLOYER CONNECTIONS

Every Wednesday, different Central Alberta employers visit the Red Deer Labour Market Information Centre (LMIC) to recruit for job openings. Employers give presentations to job seekers and career counselors at 10:30 a.m., followed by a recruitment session from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The LMIC is located at: 2nd floor, First Red Deer Place, 4911-51 St.

CANADA CAREER WEEK: CONNECTING LEARNING AND WORK

Looking for information on career development and lifelong learning? You'll find it at Canada Career Week

events happening across the region Nov. 2 to 9. In Red Deer, activities kick off Monday, Nov. 3 at the LMIC with a free pizza lunch. On Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday (Nov. 4 to 6), Employer Connections presentations will be held at the LMIC starting at 10:30 a.m. each day. A variety of informative mini-sessions for job seekers will be held on Friday, Nov. 7. Other Canada Career Week events will be held throughout the region. To find out what's happening in your community, call your local LMIC (see page 9 for a list of LMICs in the region).

JobBank



TOP JOBS

Jobs posted August 1 to 25, 2008, Red Deer Region

Red Deer Region includes Carstairs, Didsbury, Olds, Innisfail, Red Deer, Sylvan Lake, Stettler, Wetaskiwin, Ponoka, Lacombe, Rocky Mountain House, Caroline and Rimbey as well as rural areas and smaller towns around those.

OCCUPATION TITLE AND NOC CODE	NUMBER OF VACANCIES	AVERAGE WAGE
Total job ads in August*	1,624	\$16.93
Welders and Related Machine Operators (7265)	149	\$20.62
Oil and Gas Well Drillers, Servicers, Testers and Related Workers (8232)	147	N/A
Food Counter Attendants, Kitchen Helpers and Related Occupations (6641)	102	\$10.96
Truck Drivers (7411)	84	\$21.18
Retail Salespersons and Sales Clerks (6421)	67	\$14.79
Purchasing and Inventory Clerks (1474)	53	N/A
Heavy Duty Equipment Mechanics (7312)	50	\$29.66
Other Labourers in Processing, Manufacturing and Utilities (9619)	43	\$13.86
Cooks (6242)	33	\$12.57
Delivery and Courier Service Drivers (7414)	32	\$17.76

Source: Service Canada, Canada-Alberta Job Order Bank Services

N/A (Not available) means five or fewer companies posted wages for this occupation.

*August 1 - 25, 2008

FEATURED JOB

Retail trade managers (NOC 0621)

Retail trade managers plan, organize, direct, control and evaluate the operations of businesses that sell merchandise or services on a retail basis. They are employed by retail sales establishments and may also own and operate their own store.

A Grade 12 education, as well as a university degree or college diploma in business administration or other related fields, may be required. Related retail sales experience is usually required as well. Many retail trade managers start off working as retail salespersons and sales clerks. In August, employers in the Red Deer region posted 67 job ads on the Canada-Alberta job bank for retail sales persons and sales clerks, and almost 30 jobs were posted for retail trade managers. They included jobs in jewellery stores, luggage and leather goods stores, department stores, grocery stores, clothing stores, wholesaler-distributors, movie galleries and other retailers. According to the 2007 Alberta Wage and Salary Survey, retail trade managers in Alberta earned an average of \$24.23 per hour.

How to use the JobBank

JOB SEEKERS

Internet job boards like the Job Bank (www.jobbank.gc.ca) are powerful tools. With a few clicks, a job hunter can search any region of Canada for a particular job category, and even search for employers who've posted ads in the past. Job Bank also has advice on writing a resumé, tips for the job search, advice for finding unadvertised positions, information on self-employment, and notes on finding work in non-profit organizations. With computers and the Internet, job hunters can even automate parts of their job hunt.

With **Job Alert**, any job that matches one of three possible profiles will be automatically emailed to users.

Job Match allows a user to create profiles that will be automatically shown to employers searching for new workers (See page 9 for other job boards and more resources for employees.)

Meet employers in person: Connections

Once a week Red Deer's Labour Market Information Centre hosts Connections where a single employer will be available to sit down and explain their labour needs. It's an opportunity for job seekers to speak directly with the people who can best explain a job and a career. Find out about upcoming

Connections at employment.alberta.ca/central where there are links to two-page summaries of employers' presentations.

This web page also has useful information on upcoming job fairs and events, links to previous editions of the Labour Market News, and links to Finding Work In ..., a monthly publication giving practical advice about finding work in different industries.

EMPLOYERS

For employers, the Job Bank offers a simple and free way of posting job ads right across the country while the site's **Job Match** function allows employers to immediately search a database of resumé. The site also has hundreds of well organized links and articles that explain every stage in the hiring process. To post a job ad visit www.jobbank.gc.ca.

Top 10 career employment ads by industry (Red Deer Region, August 1-25 2008)

Administration NAICS 56	331
Accommodation and food NAICS 72	232
Retail NAICS 44-45	225
Manufacturing NAICS 31-33	195
Mining, oil and gas NAICS 21	170
Logistics NAICS 48-49	92
Construction NAICS 23	87
Health care NAICS 62	70
Other services NAICS 81	64
Professional NAICS 54	40

Performance Reviews

Red Deer College looks at the big picture

**Best
Practice**
FOR EMPLOYERS

Red Deer College's entire Performance Enhancement Program is public knowledge—laid out on its web site for everyone to see (www.rdc.ab.ca).

The clearly defined process helps employees understand that one of the most intimidating stages, performance reviews, is just a quick pit stop within a larger context of personal and career development. At Red Deer College (RDC), reviews are a time to look at past goals, and set new goals, but the real work is done during regular work days.

A 365-day process

"Performance reviews are just one part of the picture," explains Kari Brown, an RDC human resources consultant. "At Red Deer College, reviews are part of a cycle where employees monitor their own progress throughout the year, and keep communicating with their supervisor about their personal goals and objectives."

Keeping the process alive 365 days a year pays off with a sharper focus on the big picture, says Brown.

"Dialogue ties personal goals into departmental goals and college-wide goals," says Brown. "It provides an opportunity to regularly touch base about progress and whether the goals are still reasonable."

The more input, the better

While RDC marks off the entire calendar for professional development, it also seeks input from every direction.

In HR circles, it's called '360 degree feedback.' In practice, it means a performance review is a mixture of perspectives from the manager, the employee, internal and external clients and co-workers.

"Before the actual review, employees and supervisors will identify an agreed upon list of clients and co-workers who understand their job and can give some relevant feedback," says Brown. "It gives the employee a much better idea about how they're performing, by bringing in additional feedback



Kari Brown with the college's Performance Enhancement Program.

from people from outside of their department, and even clients."

Keeping it real

Many HR professionals are adamant that performance reviews should stick to measurable results and goals, and RDC agrees. "We try and make the goals very specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time framed," says Brown. "So if we want to improve computer skills, for example, we have some specific targets to benchmark improvement, and set a goal to attend an Excel course by October 2008, and develop a spreadsheet by January 15th to track XYZ".

For Brown, the college's system has proved a success in her own career. "I just went through the process for the first time," says Brown. "It was a very positive experience. When I was doing my self-evaluation review, it gave me time to reflect, and look at all the things I had accomplished."

Even when her supervisor came into the picture there weren't any major surprises. "Since we touch base fairly regularly I had an idea where things were going, and during the review I didn't have a lot of surprises—any surprises really. It was a gratifying experience."

For more information on the college's performance reviews, contact Brown at 403-356-4883.

Help with performance reviews

The Internet is crowded with advice on performance reviews and a few organizations post their standardized forms, which can be mixed up and adapted to an employer's needs.

- Carnegie Mellon University has a concise one-page checklist for supervisors going into performance reviews (hr.web.cmu.edu/forms/managers/PerformanceReviewChecklist.pdf).
- The goals and process of a performance review are discussed in more detail at the www.agcareers.com website, in the article 'How to Do an Employee Appraisal.'
- In the 'Entrepreneur's Resource Center' on the Edward Lowe Foundation web page (www.edwardlowe.org), is a series of articles on performance reviews. They cover everything from whether to use objective or subjective criteria, how to handle challenges from employees and whether to tie reviews to pay (many employers keep them separate). The strength of this resource is practical advice and a wealth of examples from real world companies that have made a variety of choices.
- If you are looking for the blunt truth about performance appraisals and where employers go wrong, visit www.performance-appraisals.org, and read Ten Stupid Things Managers Do To Screw Up Performance Appraisal. The site also has a wealth of articles on performance reviews. For an employer who is serious about investigating assessment methods or wanting more detailed information about different techniques for the interview, this is a good starting point.
- RDC Continuing Education is offering a course on performance reviews (www.rdc.ab.ca/continuingeducation).

EMPLOYERS

Performance reviews

Continued from page 1

What makes a good review?

Performance reviews come in all shapes and sizes. Commonly, an employer will provide a written review of the employee's performance and then talk about the results in a meeting where both employer and employee can identify any problems and come up with a plan to improve. But John Mackenzie, a Red Deer business coach with Action Coach, sees the process beginning one step ahead.

"First, the employee and the employer need to have a good idea about the job description," says Mackenzie. "You have to know what the job is and what to reasonably expect." Sometimes, a fresh and unbiased look at a position can be an eye-opener. "Managers can be shocked when they find out how much some jobs entail," says Mackenzie.

With a solid understanding of the position, managers can go on to define the results they expect and evaluate an employee's performance within a well-defined context of targets or key performance indicators (often called KPIs).

As a manager prepares for the review, it's important to gather as much information as possible from a variety of sources, remembering the review is meant to cover a long period, not just what happened in the last two weeks.

During the meeting start with the positive, and keep the atmosphere open, with each side doing an equal amount of

listening (many human resource professionals suggest the employee should be speaking 80 per cent of the time). A comfortable and quiet meeting place can help the process.

Once the review begins to look at weaknesses, keep a focus on problem-solving and plans for improvement. By the end of the meeting both parties should have a clear understanding where they want to be for the next meeting, and how they plan to get there. A written objective signed off by both employee and manager can include specific actions, a measurable result and a time frame. Throughout the review the emphasis should be on two-way communication. The last thing managers want is employees feeling like they are being issued a report card from a teacher.

When you add it up, a performance review shouldn't create more stress. It should reduce it. "Reviews should be really simple," says Mackenzie. "It should be like a status check where you find out what's working, and what's not."

The employee should come out motivated to improve their performance. "Reviews give the employee the tools they need to self-manage," says Mackenzie. "They now know what's expected and how they're going to get there."

Once the employee and employer start seeing the performance review as one more avenue to communicate, it will have all the pressure of a routine cleaning at the dentist.

FOR A BEST PRACTICE STORY ON A COMPANY THAT USES PERFORMANCE REVIEWS, AND A LIST OF RESOURCES ON THE SUBJECT, SEE PAGE 7

EMPLOYER Resources

Both federal and provincial governments have practical programs to help meet the current need for workers in this tight labour market. Here are a few programs that can be of assistance to business.

Information sources

The Labour Market Information page on the Alberta Employment and Immigration (E&I) website offers links to labour force statistics, forecasts, and wage and salary information. (employment.alberta.ca/lmi)

- The Central Alberta Economic Partnership (CAEP) website (www.centralalberta.ab.ca) has hundreds of links to information sources, and programs, including:
- Support for Training Workers
- Wage Subsidy Programs
- Recruiting Employees
- Employment Services in Central Alberta
- Foreign Worker Employer Guide

Seminars and networking

Employer Connections are held every Wednesday at the Labour Market Information Centre, 2nd Floor, First Red Deer Place, 4911-51 St. (across from the Provincial Building).

The meetings are an opportunity to meet job seekers, employment agencies and career counsellors.

Each week a single employer is showcased and presents their perspective.

To participate free of charge call 403-340-4342 and ask for a Business and Industry Liaison.

Labour solutions

- Red Deer Aboriginal Employment Services. Ph. 403-358-7734
- Career Assistance Network teams unemployed workers with employers. Ph. 403-341-7811
- Employment Placement Support Services supports adults over 25, and persons with disabilities age 18 and over. Ph. 403-343-6249
- Employment Access offers employment programs for clients with disabilities. Ph. 403-341-2363
- DRES provides support and assistance to employers hiring people with disabilities. Contact the Canada-Alberta Service Centre in Red Deer. Ph. 403-340-5353

Personalized help when needed

There are dozens of programs available to employers. E&I employees will visit the workplace and provide a summary of options and opportunities.

For example, they can direct managers to initiatives that will help their business.

For more information call 403-340-4342 and ask for a Business and Industry Liaison.

Sign up free: We're live and online

In the News, an electronic digest about regional business expansions, relocations and closures, and Finding Work In, which profiles different career opportunities, are available online at employment.alberta.ca/central.

A free subscription service will notify you by e-mail when the latest edition of each product comes out.

On the same web page there are Labour Market News products for Stettler, Wetaskiwin, Vermillion and Wainwright.

JOB SEEKER

Resources

There are many resources in the central region that can be helpful to job seekers and workers alike.

Where to find us

In the News, an electronic digest about regional business expansions, relocations and closures, and Finding Work In, which profiles different career opportunities, are available online at employment.alberta.ca/central.

A free subscription service will notify you by e-mail when the latest edition of each product comes out.

Job search and career websites

- www.jobbank.gc.ca (Job listings, links and other services)
- www.alis.gov.ab.ca (Alberta Learning Information Service)
- www.workopolis.ca (Job listings)
- www.monster.ca (Job listings)
- www.nextsteps.org (Job resources for youth)
- www.albertajobs.com (Job listings)
- www.hgcareers.com (Job listings)
- www.healthjobs.ab.ca (Health care job listings)

Job search and career information by phone

Alberta Career Information Hotline:
1-800-661-3753

Fax: 780-422-0372 TDD: 780-422-5283

Resumé review service

The Government of Alberta e-Resumé Review Service is a great way to have a resumé reviewed and improved, before sending it to employers.

To access the service, log on to www.alis.gov.ab.ca/hotline/resume and follow the instructions to send your resumé for review.

The service is free to residents of Alberta and those seeking work in Alberta.

Resources for labour market information

These websites offer a wealth of labour market information on Alberta and specific communities.

- employment.alberta.ca/lmi (Alberta Employment and Immigration)
- www.alis.gov.ab.ca (Alberta Learning Information Service)
- www.albertafirst.com (Business and economic information)
- www.centralalberta.ab.ca (Central Alberta Economic Partnership)

- www.alis.gov.ab.ca/employment/lmi/alberta.asp (Labour market information across Alberta)
- www.labourmarketinformation.ca (Service Canada)

Seminars and networking

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The meetings are an opportunity to meet employers face to face.

New to Town?

Past issues of Labour Market News featured information for communities in Central Alberta.

See past bulletins for employment, social services, health care, transportation and other great resources available in your community.

CITY / TOWN	MONTH
Camrose	July 2007
Didsbury	October 2007
Drayton Valley	June 2007
Innisfail	September 2007
Lacombe	August 2007
Olds	February 2007
Ponoka	November 2007
Red Deer	January 2007
Rocky Mountain House	April 2007
Stettler	March 2007
Sylvan Lake	December 2007
Wetaskiwin	May 2007

**LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION CENTRES**

Labour Market Information Centres (LMICs) provide information to help you make career, learning and work decisions. LMICs have books, magazines, newspapers, software and videos about employment-related topics.

There are LMICs across Alberta. For a complete list, see: employment.alberta.ca/lmic.

LMICs in Central Alberta:**Camrose Alberta Service Centre**

3rd Flr., Gemini Centre, 6708 - 48 Ave.
Ph. 780-608-2525

Drayton Valley Sub-Office

2nd Floor Provincial Building
5136 - 51 Ave. Ph. 780-542-3134

Olds Alberta Service Centre

4905 - 50 Ave. Ph. 403-507-8060

Red Deer Canada-Alberta Service Centre

2nd Floor First Red Deer Place, 4911 - 51 St.
Ph. 403-340-5353

Rocky Mountain House Alberta Service Centre, 4919 - 51 St. Ph. 403-845-8590

Stettler Alberta Service Centre

4835 - 50 St. Ph. 403-742-7586

Wetaskiwin Alberta Service Centre

1st Floor Macadill Building
5201 - 51 Ave. Ph. 780-361 1272

Lloydminster LMIC

5016 - 48 St. Ph. 780-871-6445

Wainwright LMIC

810 - 14 Ave. Ph. 780-842-7500

Vermilion LMIC

4701 - 52 St. Ph. 780-853-8164

